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The Rendille Subsistence Groups Based on Age-system

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ABSTRACT

The Rendille, Eastern Cushitic camel pastoralists, live in northern Kenya of East Africa. In this article, firstly, the age-system, the developmental cycle of the family, and the organization of subsistence group are analysed, and it is concluded that the age-system and the patrilineal descent group with higher political, economic, and residential corporateness play an important role in maintaining the pastoral subsistence of the Rendille. Secondly, the Rendille age-system is compared with that of their neighboring pastoral peoples in terms of structure and function, and it is discussed that some modifications have been made in the three points: the period of enrollment into age-set, acceptance of climbing up to a higher age-set, and sapadi institution, on the age-system to meet the Rendille subsistence.

INTRODUCTION.

The Rendille*, numbering some 20,000 persons, are an Eastern-Cushitic population occupying an area of 50,000 km² in the arid lowland of northern Kenya. They cannot practice cultivation with their rudimentary technology in the lowlands where annual rainfall is less than 255 mm. Thus, they depend almost exclusively on nomadic pastoralism for their subsistence.

The Rendilleland (ili-Rendille) extends from the eastern shore of Lake Turkana, in the west, eastwards to the main road linking Kenya and Ethiopia. The northern boundary is marked by the Chalbi Desert, and the southern by Baragoi, Wamba and Archer's Post. Most of this area lies at an elevation of 400-1200 m above sea level, with Mt. Marsabit (1707 m) in the northeast, Mt. Kulal (2604 m) and Mt. Nyru (2753 m) in the west and Mt. Ndoto (2637 m) and the Mathews Range (2376 m) in the south. There is a gradual decrease in elevation east of the western highlands, in the vicinity of Mt. Kulal, Mt. Nyru and Mt. Ndoto. The lowland continues through Somaliland to the Indian coast. Rendilleland is located at the eastern edge of the Rift Valley, and a zone of black lava is prominent from the east shore of Lake Turkana to the foot of Mt. Marsabit.

The Rendille raise mainly camels and small livestock (goats and sheep); subsidiarily a few cattle and donkeys. Of them, cattle and small livestock are used as cash animals for agricultural products, such as maize flour, but only in case of need. However, the Rendille do not rear livestock for the purpose of commercial profit, and are only marginally involved in the external economy. They lead a full-time subsistence-oriented pastoral way of life.

Because the most distinct feature of the precipitation in Rendilleland is its wide variation in both time and space, the herders are forced to lead the livestock to places of pasturage and water as occasion may demand. Moreover, many herders are required to maintain multi-typed pastoralism, where many types of livestock with different characteristics in physiology and ecology are raised in combination. To cope with these problems, the Rendille organize

subsistence groups through inter-family cooperation. In this case, the membership of a higher corporate patrilineal descent group and age-set plays an important role.

In this paper, I intend to present the organizational process of the subsistence group and make comparative considerations about its speciality and generality among the East African pastoralists. This will be approached from an ecological view-point, for clarification of speciality and generality of the organizational process of the Rendille subsistence group will contribute to a better understanding of the adaptation of the East African pastoralists to their arid environment.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND SUBSISTENCE ACTIVITY.

The descent groups of the Rendille are based on the principle of patrilineality (ilibatteri) and are organized into a clan system (Keesing 1976, translation; 61-62, Sato in press). In order of higher to lower level of segmentation, they are arranged into the moiety (belesi), the clan (goup), the sub-clan (yaf) and the lineage group (keiya). The largest of these groups, the moiety is divided into the eastern moiety (belesi-beri) and the western moiety (belesi-bahai), which are composed of four and five patrilineal clans respectively. In turn, each clan is segmented into two to seven sub-clans, each of which is further segmented into five to 30 lineage groups. Individuals can concretely trace themselves back just two or three generations, only to recognize a fictitious common ancestor within the same clan.

Patrilineal descent groups are ranked on the basis of segmentary seniority. This segmentary seniority determines the residential site of each family within a settlement. Each married woman has her own dome-shaped hut, which is arranged into a circle with other huts in the settlement grounds. The most senior family builds their huts on the northwestern corner, and in order of seniority, huts of the other families are built one after another in clockwise direction. As a general rule, the elder of the most senior family of the settlement conducts daily "evening prayer" and annual feasts, which are collectively held within the settlement. Also, a settlement is usually named after the clan, the sub-clan or the most senior family.

In Rendille society, males are the legal owner of the livestock. After the death of the father, the first-born son (the eldest son of the first wife) not only succeeds the headship of the family, but also inherits his father's residual livestock. A few of these animals are then redistributed among his younger sons by the eldest son. If there is no agnatic descendant left after the father's death, all of his livestock are passed on to his eldest brother. Both patrimony of livestock and family headship are transferred to the first son according to strict rule of primogeniture.

Sons cannot escape the control of the father since they cannot separate their own independent herds out of the family's and cannot claim for offering the sacred milk (sadaha) to the God until they marry and the father has passed away. Within the family, a father and his first son hold a critical position on the basis of strict rule of primogeniture. A man's ideal family is a polygynous one. The groom must have the marriage ceremony in the bride's settlement and live there for some years after the marriage. After this period he may move back into patrilocal residence. The groom pays the bride's family eight head of camels as bridewealth. This payment puts economic stress on Rendille males since the per capita average of livestock among the Rendille is 9.4 head of small livestock and 3.0 head of camel (Sato 1980: 43). The polygyny rate among the Rendille is 1.1 to 1.2 (Grum 1976: 28-29, Spencer 1965: 295). This indicates that the Rendille, like the Gabra (Torry 1976: 277-279), tend to have nuclear families, in contrast to other East African

pastoralists whose polygyny rate*² ranges from 1.5 to 2.3.

The Rendille have two different places of residence, the settlement (goup) and the herding camp (forr). In the settlement a circle (nabo) is, without exception, constructed in the central ground with a fence of thorn trees. Toward the outside of the central circle, the livestock enclosures are constructed in similar fashion. The enclosures for small livestock and cattle are constructed adjacent to the outer thorn-fence of the enclosure for camels. The huts are arranged and built in a rough circle between the enclosures for livestock and the outermost circular fence of thorn trees which guards against carnivores and marauders. Only elders (and male tots, if accompanied by the fathers) are permitted to enter the central circle, where they meet together every evening for the collective prayer to the God and to discuss the day's problems and events. It is in this central circle that they hold public discussions, make decisions, formally receive guests and perform their collective ceremonies.

The settlements are moved and built in a completely different geographical region from that of the herding camps, although they are not moved as frequently as the herding camps. The residents within a settlement consist of a cluster of members of the same sub-clan with the addition of a few affines. They tend to change residence within the settlements of the same clan. These settlements are dispersed and aggregated into 2 to 5 sites. In a settlement, 40 to 300 persons reside in 9 to 65 huts.

Of herding camps, distinctions are made according to the type of livestock to be herded there. There are three types, the small livestock camp (adi-forr), camel camp (gaal-forr) and cattle camp (loio-ti-forr). In principle these three types of camps are frequently moved in response to the distribution of pasturage and water and are usually constructed apart from each other, although cattle are occasionally combined with small livestock in the same camp.

Herding camps are constructed for the purpose of tending livestock. When rainfall brings fresh pasturages around the settlement, livestock are taken back to the settlement and the daily herding is carried out near by. In this period herding camps disappear.

As dry season progresses and available pasturage is too far for a one-day round-trip, the herders leave the settlement with their livestock and construct the herding camps where necessary. It is not unusual that herding camps are maintained for 8 to 10 months out of a year in an area 100 to 200 km away from the settlement. In a herding camp there may be 10 to 60 residents, most of whom are individuals engaged directly in the daily herding of livestock, and a few of which are temporary visitors.

The herding of livestock is maintained by the division of labor based on a distinct sex and age-system. The senior youths control and lead the herding management and make decisions about the place and time to herd livestock. However in practice, the senior boys are engaged in the day's herding of large stock, whereas the unmarried girls and younger boys are engaged in that of small stock. The married persons temporarily assist in herding livestock instead of unmarried herders, and the unmarried girls instead of senior boys take care of large livestock. Also, in the small livestock camp young elders without grown children used to take care of their own small livestock. In the large livestock camps, the above-mentioned division of labor becomes clearer.

Table 1 shows the dispersed population between settlements and herding camps. The figures are calculated on the basis of the population census of five settlements known by the same clan name. This population census was carried out in February of 1983. While herding camps were constructed in different areas, of the total residents of these settlements (551 persons), 123 persons (22 %) left their settlement for the small livestock camp, 59 persons (11 %) for the camel camp, and 31 persons (6 %) for the cattle camp.

Table 1. Population dispersion between settlements * and herding camps
(Feb. 1983)

| Residents | Settlement | Camp of small livestock. | Camp of camels. | Camp of cattle. | Total |
|-----------------|----------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Male: | | | | | |
| Married | 50 | 30 | 0 | 2 | 82 |
| Youth ** | 0 | 22 | 26 | 18 | 66 |
| Boy | 10 | 25 | 33 | 11 | 79 |
| Tot (0-7 yr.) | 59 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 59 |
| total | 119 | 77 | 59 | 31 | 286 |
| Female: | | | | | |
| Married | 135 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 135 |
| Pubescent *** | 6 | 28 | 0 | 0 | 34 |
| Girl (7-15 yr.) | 14 | 18 | 0 | 0 | 32 |
| Tot (0-7 yr.) | 64 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 64 |
| total | 219 | 46 | 0 | 0 | 265 |
| Total | 338 (61%) | 123 (22%) | 59 (11%) | 31 (6%) | 551 (100%) |

* five settlements of the same clan. ** circumcised unmarried persons.
*** unmarried females over 15 years old.

The daily herding activity may be divided between settlement-based herding and camp-based herding, according to the place where the animals are taken back daily after feeding or watering. But both the camps and the settlements are regarded as cooperative herding groups, which share enclosures in the same place where the several herds are accommodated. The members of the same cooperative herding group are, in principle, most likely to collaborate with each other in the daily herding, watering, and defence. Within the cooperative herding group, there are many cooperative management groups, formed by the legal owners of livestock. They pen their livestock in the same communal enclosure in order to maintain the herd at an effective breeding size and to compensate for the shortage of manpower.

A herd of livestock is defined as those animals accommodated in the same enclosure. The Rendille have three types of herds: the camel herd, cattle herd, and small livestock herd, each of which is controlled under separate herding management. All herds are subdivided into mature and immature animals for the daily herding. Within the same herd, a full-time herder tends mature animals, while one or two herders (usually young boys or girls) tend immature animals from different herds. In this way, the cooperation among co-residents within the same cooperative herding group reduces the number of herders necessary to tend a herd. Thus, at least three herders are required for a family to maintain its independent management of both camels and small livestock, the most popular animals in Rendille subsistence.

AGE-SYSTEM.

The Rendille age-system is composed of age-grade, age-set (*kholo*) and what Gulliver (1951: 127) calls " alternation " (*malada*). Both sexes are classified into age-grades, but only males are organized into age-sets and alternations. Alternation is divided into "big alternation" (*maladi-buure*) and " little alternation " (*maladi-nichul*) every generation. Females do not

Table 2. Age-set and age-grade of the Rendille.

| Age-grade | sub-grade (-age gap-) | age-set | |
|--|----------------------------------|------------------------|------------|
| Elderhood (<u>aram</u> pl. <u>aramme</u>) | Retired elderhood — 68 - 86 — | Defgudo (extinct) | * Elibalis |
| | Senior elderhood — 54 - 72 — | * Elibalis | Libale |
| | Middle elderhood — 40 - 58 — | Libale | Iribandiff |
| | Junior elderhood — 26 - 44 — | Iribandiff | * Defgudo |
| | | | |
| Youth (<u>her</u> pl. <u>her</u>) | 12 - 30 | * Defgudo | Ikilolo |
| Boyhood (<u>inam</u> pl. <u>iele</u>) | | | |
| the year of circumcision | | 1965 | 1979 |

* the component age-set of teeria.

have their own alternation. Each woman is assigned to her husband's alternation after marriage. At birth males are assigned to the alternation opposite to that of their father, and both grandson and his grandfather are assigned to the same alternation.

Males are divided into three age grades; boyhood, youth, and elderhood. Elderhood is sub divided into four sub grades; junior, middle, senior and retired elderhood. Males are classified into boyhood from birth to circumcision, and into youth from circumcision to marriage, and in elderhood from marriage to death. Males are circumcised into youth and are enrolled in an age set. An age set is formed over the Rendilleland once every 14 years. After this they marry to shift their age grade from youth to elderhood. Elders are collectively promoted to the adjacent senior sub grade as members of the age set every time a new age set is formed. Finally, they end their lives as members of the retired elderhood (Table 2). Females have two age-grades; girlhood and womanhood. They marry to shift their age grade from girlhood to womanhood.

The calender of the Rendille is based on twelve lunar months and a weekly cycle of seven days. In the seven day weekly cycle, Gumad (Friday), Sabdi (Saturday), Ahat (Sunday), Alasmin (Monday), Talaada (Tuesday), Arbah (Wednesday), and Khamis (Thursday) rotate. Years have identical names with those of the days of the week, so that the same name of year is repeated every seven years. The ceremonies of age system are performed in accordance with this seven year cycle. Especially, the circumcision ceremony is held on the year of " Friday " once every 14 years.

Eligible boys are collectively circumcised together in their settlements by elders of the Bolo lineage group and the elders intrusted by them. Both are of the Tupcha clan. After circumcision, each initiate forms five kinds of bond friends within the first few months. These bonds are soloi, bilian, guen, njebe and giou. During this period, the initiates may exchange or share certain items and adopt reciprocal terms of address which they retain throughout life instead of their personal names. If one drinks the sour milk with blood from the same milk container with another initiate, from that point

on they must call each other soloi, the reciprocal term of address and reference. If one gives someone one of his arrows, then they call each other bilian. If one gives another a bird he shot, then they call each other guen. There is an order to the formation of bond friends and njebe and giou are formed last to be formed. For the purpose of forming the last two bond friends, the initiates take sheep into the bush in groups of twos and threes, without female eyes, and slaughter them. If one drinks the blood from the neck vein together with another initiate, they call each other njebe. After this, one passes the fat from the underside of the carcass (hik) over the partner's body from face to right arm, and from this moment on they call each other giou. Giou infers a strong coercive moral obligation for mutual aid among the bond friends. The Samburu (Spencer 1973: 87-90) and the Rendille are very similar in the proceedings and kinds of bond friends.

In the year of " Saturday ", the first year after that of circumcision, the initiates and their parents move from their settlements to the ceremonial place and build their huts in a clockwise direction within a gigantic thorn-fenced circle, where they perform the name-giving ceremony. Clans of the Western moiety build their huts in the northern half of the settlement and those of the Eastern moiety in the southern half. This ceremony is known as galgurme and is performed once by each age-set, at which time each age-set is given its name. Also, from this point on the enrollment in the age-set is closed except for two cases. The family all of youth of whom died from sickness or in battle is allowed to fill up this vacancy by initiating a younger son into the age-set with the consent of clan elders. This is the first exceptional case. The second exceptional case is that of " climbing up to a higher age-set ". This will be discussed in greater detail later.

In the year of " Tuesday ", the eleventh year after the year of the circumcision ceremony, youths of different clans come together in the ceremonial place and perform the marriage-opening ceremony, otherwise known as the nabo ceremony. Within three years after this ceremony, all of the youth are expected to marry and pass into elderhood. This means that youths are not allowed to marry until approximately 11 years after circumcision. In the year of " Friday ", the fourteenth year after the circumcision ceremony, the succeeding age-set is inaugurated.

The uncircumcised boys are prohibited from having sexual intercourse with any female. Youths are permitted to discreetly have sexual intercourse with females unless they make the girl pregnant. If they do so, they are regarded as dirty and are excluded from the ritual field. Concerning dietary manners, youths are prohibited from eating meat inside of the settlement and are expected to have their meals together with other age-mates.

Concerning the milking of camels, mother camels with suckling infants must be milked by either elders whose wives are in menopause or are nursing children. Youth engaged in sexual activity are not permitted to milk camels. Only boys are allowed to milk the colostrum of camels. However, there is no particular age-grade-dependent rule for milking camels whose infants have died, and even elders can milk them. Taking into account that elders are expected to refrain from having sexual intercourse while their wives are nursing, suckling is considered to be the opposite of sexual intercourse for both humans and camels. The Rendille believe that infant camels will die, if the rules governing the milking of camels are broken.

Among youths, the first son has no choice but to deal with various domestic problems as the successor to his father as the head of the family. However, he is not allowed to participate in the meetings of elders until he marries.

Elders retire from the herding management of livestock, and mainly live in their settlements where they are responsible for making decisions on community-related problems, including political and religious policies. Strictly speaking, it is the middle and senior elders that make decisions on

such policies, while junior elders play the role of probationer. Middle elders are largely responsible for taking charge of performing the ceremonies related to the age-set of youth. Retired elders do not always participate in meetings, and do not directly take part in making decisions on all community-related problems. They at most participate in annual feasts. However, the Rendille are in awe of retired elders because they firmly believe that retired elders hold the most powerful curse (fahan) and blessing (ueisi).

As mentioned above, there is no age-set in boyhood, one age-set in youth, and 3 to 4 age-sets in elderhood. This age-system provides the Rendille with an organizational frame-work not only for a political system, but also for that of a subsistence system.

The order for sons to be enrolled into the age-set is determined by both biological age (over 12 years old) and generational age. This is determined by seniority between brothers, so that the younger brother may not become a member of an age-set earlier than the elder brother. Affiliation between the father and his sons is also important, so that sons should become members of the third age-set below that of the father's at the earliest. Accordingly, the first son born the first year after his father had married immediately after the end of marriage-opening ceremony, can become a member of an age-set at the age of 30. Among sons, at least the first belongs to the third age-set below that of his father, and usually the remaining sons belong to an age-set no less than the third or no greater than the sixth one below that of their father.

The age-set line (Spencer 1973: 33), which is known as ohonnie, is composed of those age-sets which link in every third connection in the linear sequence of age-sets. The two age-sets which are adjacent in every third connection parallel the affiliation between the father and his first son. The sequence of age-sets includes three age-set lines, one of which in particular is known as teeria. The females whose father belongs to the component age-sets of teeria are called " sapadi ". All females except sapadi, marry at the same time as the youths of the second age-set below their fathers' age-set marry. Sapadi must wait until the youths of the third age-set below their fathers' age-set marry. In other words, sapadi cannot marry until their eldest brothers marry. Thus the marriageable age for sapadi is delayed by the inauguration interval of an age-set, which is equivalent to 14 years later than the marriageable age of other females. Accordingly, the sapadi females born in the first year after their father married immediately after the end of the marriage-opening ceremony, marry at the age of 44. Other females marry no later than at the age of 30.

Based on a population census taken in 1976, the average age of the males to marry was estimated to be 32 and that of the females to be 25 years of age (Sato 1980: 7).

By definition nobody should change his age-set membership (Spencer 1976: 153), but in the Rendille age-system youths are allowed to be promoted or " climb up " to the age-set directly above that which he initially joined, unless he deviates from the rule of affiliation between the father and his sons. If the youth who wants to climb up to a higher age-set participates in the name-giving ceremony and throws an ostrich feather up on to an acacia tree, Acacia tortilis (dahar), he is allowed to marry earlier than the other age-mates circumcised at the same time. But it is not until the marriage-opening ceremony is held that he is recognized as a proper member of the higher age-set, namely a member of the junior elderhood. The climber to a higher age-set accounts for at most only 5 % of all age-mates in any given age-set. They belong to both age-sets with ambiguous membership, whereas the other non-climbing age-mates have a stronger identity with each other as they were circumcised together and married together.

Generally speaking, the principal norm of the age-set system is based on equality between age-mates and the respect and submission to the senior age-

set. From the view-point of youth in the Rendille age-set system, most of the members of the third age-set above their age-set are their fathers. All the members of the second age-set above their age-set manage the ceremonies related to the age-set in youth. Many members of this age-set are those who will become fathers-in-law to these youths because most of these youths marry their daughters. For these reasons, among elders, the middle and senior elders take the more superior stand in controlling the youth in terms of structure and morality. Moreover, the superiority of the senior age-set over the junior age-set is reinforced by their holding the power of curse and blessing.

Females like boys begin to learn to take care of immature animals of small livestock at the age of seven, participating in the work of a small livestock camp at the age of ten. They are engaged in daily herding and milking of small livestock until marriage. After marriage, females retire from herding small livestock and build their hut in the settlement to devote themselves to both child-rearing and domestic work.

In Rendille society, unmarried females are strictly prohibited from becoming pregnant, and should it occur, they are forced to have their illegitimate children artificially aborted or killed at birth in cooperation with their mothers and genitors. Such females are permanently excluded from participation in any kind of ceremony.

As have been mentioned, females are subjected to strict oppression of sexual activity until after marriage, upon which time they become relatively free to do as they like. A woman does not receive social punishment unless she deviates from the norm, even if a woman should commit adultery; although an unpleasant feeling may be left between the couple or between the husband and adulterer. However near relatives, a man and the wife whose husband belongs to a different alternation from him, the man in a senior position between age-sets, or brothers and the wife whose husband is in the junior position, are all prohibited from having sexual intercourse with each other. Conversely, within the same alternation, man may have sexual intercourse with the wife of his age-mate, of the senior age-sets, except for his father's, and of his elder brother. To such relationships the generic name of dumasi is given. Dumasi is also used as a reciprocal term of address and reference instead of one's personal name. Dumasi is referred to as cicisbeo or "open lover" and the partners of cicisbeism openly joke and dally with each other.

Consequently, whether a woman's husband is alive or not, she can have children, all of which are accepted as the legitimate children of that husband. The Rendille age-system is considered to have the function of population control, since it imposes birth control by infanticide and delays the marriage of sapadi females during the early part of their reproductive age. Based on the census of 1976, the annual population growth rate was estimated to be from 1.7 to 2.6 % (Sato 1980: 8).

DEVELOPMENTAL CYCLE OF THE FAMILY.

The development of the family is cyclic as determined by the age-system discussed above. The increase of family members is also controlled by late marriage, population control, and the heavy burden of bridewealth. As a man is promoted from junior elderhood to middle elderhood, and to senior elderhood, his family gradually increase in size. However, the marriage of sons and daughters causes a rapid decrease as he is promoted from senior elderhood into retired elderhood. Table 3 shows the number of family members three years after the inauguration of the ikilolo age-set.

Rendille pastoral subsistence is supported by the herders who are engaged in the herding management and the daily herding of livestock. Thus the unmarried persons over seven years old are regarded as subsistence supporters

Table 3. Correlation of age-set with development of the family

| Age-set of family head | No. of family | No. of members per family (person) | No. of supporter * per family (person) | Effectives ** (%) |
|------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------|--|---------------------|
| Iribangudo # | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Defgudo # | 4 | 2.3 | 0.8 | 34.8 |
| Elibalis | 20 | 3.4 | 1.6 | 47.1 |
| Libale | 28 | 6.6 | 4.0 | 60.6 |
| Iribandiff | 25 | 5.3 | 2.4 | 45.3 |
| Defgudo | 49 | 3.7 | 0 | 0 |
| total average | | 4.5 | 1.6 | 36.1 |

dead member. * unmarried persons over 7 years old. (Feb. 1983)

$$** \text{ effectives} = \frac{(\text{No. of supporters}) \times 100}{(\text{No. of supporters}) + (\text{No. of dependents})}$$

Table 4. The relationships of cooperative management group (Feb. 1983)

| Social relationship | Herd of small livestock | Herd of camels | Herd of cattle |
|---------------------|-------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| A) near agnates: | | | |
| independent | 25 | 2 | 2 |
| brother | 17 | 4 | 5 |
| uncle - nephew | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| cousin | 4 | 3 | 2 |
| total | 46 (69.7) | 10 (38.5) | 9 (69.2) |
| B) distant agnates: | | | |
| same lineage group | 3 | 5 | 2 |
| same clan | 2 | 9 | 1 |
| total | 5 (7.6) | 14 (53.8) | 3 (23.1) |
| C) affines: | | | |
| father-in-law - | | | |
| son-in-law | 8 | 1 | 1 |
| brother-in-law | 7 | 1 | 0 |
| total | 15 (22.7) | 2 (7.7) | 1 (7.7) |
| Total | 66 (100 %) | 26 (100 %) | 13 (100 %) |

since the married persons are expected to retire from full-time herding of livestock. Moreover, at least three unmarried persons per family is necessary for a family to support itself in terms of man-power. Thus, there are indications that while a family in the stage of middle elderhood (iribandiff) is able to support itself, the family in the stage of senior elderhood (libale) is most capable of completely supporting itself. As a whole, the average number of supporters per family is 1.6 persons. This means that not

all families can support themselves. Table 4 shows the social relationship between those legal owners of livestock who together construct the cooperative homestead. Although the expressed ideal is for a man to establish an independent homestead with more wives and livestock, in practice only 2 homesteads (8 %) out of 26 conformed to that ideal. Thus, inter-family cooperation is indispensable to pastoral subsistence.

The remaining 24 homesteads are formed through inter-family cooperation and function to coordinate the differences in the developmental cycle of each family. It is fundamental that cooperative homesteads are formed through near agnatic relationships. Out of 66 cooperative management groups of small livestock, 46 groups (69.7 %) are formed through near agnatic ties, 15 groups (22.7 %) through affinal ties and 5 groups (7.6 %) through distant agnatic ties. Out of 26 cooperative management groups of camels, 10 groups (38.5 %) are formed through near agnatic ties, 14 groups (53.8 %) through distant agnatic ties and only 2 groups (7.7 %) through affinal ties. Out of 13 cooperative management groups of cattle, 9 groups (69.2 %), 2 groups (23.1 %) and 1 group (7.7 %), are formed through near agnatic ties, distant agnatic ties and affinal ties, respectively.

For any type of livestock, the cooperative management groups are fundamentally formed through near agnatic ties, but it makes a difference which kind of ties, distant agnatic or affinal ties, is more important to form cooperative management group. Importance is attached to distant agnatic ties rather than affinal ties in forming cooperative management groups of large livestock. Conversely, importance is attached to affinal ties rather than distant agnatic ties when forming a group for the cooperative management of small livestock.

In 1976, near agnatic ties were predominantly important in the cooperative management of small livestock, and both near agnatic ties and distant agnatic ties were equally important in that of camels (Sato 1980: 43-44). Nearly all youths (defgudo age-set) married between 1976 and 1979, and the cooperative management groups were reorganized.

The small livestock are in principle attached to the nuclear family for their use. These animals are composed of the husband's own livestock that allotted to each wife by the husband and the dowry animals of each wife. Small livestock of different nuclear families are usually penned in different enclosures, but even if the small livestock of one nuclear family is combined with that of another into the same enclosure, every nuclear family has its own entrance into the enclosure. Although men have the primary right of possession and disposal of small livestock, they often show disinterest in such matters. Unmarried girls and boys too young to be out herding camels are put in charge of herding small livestock. Thus, small livestock are easily moved from a husband's clan settlement to that of his wife's and it is not unusual that they are tended there through affinal cooperation.

Although a man has primary, but not absolute, right of possession of his camels, these camels are expected to be collectively tended daily by the youths of his clan as if they were joint stock-wealth of the clan. Also, within the family, the father and his first son take joint charge of the family camels and make every effort to prevent them from being dispersed. This effort is so coercive that a man is very hesitant in moving all of his camels to his wife's settlement separately from his father and brothers. Usually, a man only moves enough milking camels as is necessary to meet the immediate needs of his family. Thus, camels, unlike small livestock, are retained and managed by members of the patrilineal descent group.

As mentioned above, the age-system and the patrilineal descent group with higher political, economic, and residential corporateness play an important role in maintaining the pastoral subsistence of the Rendille.

DISCUSSION; SOME ECOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

The age-system is composed of such elementary concepts as sex, age, and generation. At most, it presents a cognitive and structural framework of group formation. Furthermore, generally speaking, it appears in various forms (Nagashima 1974: 728-729) and has various functions such as political, economic, ritual, military, socializing and chronological (Baxter & Almagor 1978: 5). Thus, the function of the age-system seems to be clarified in the context of making an issue of some particular aspect of society.

From a structural view-point, it is said that the age-system is so easily modified by cultural contacts that the problems of intermarriage and inter-ethnic relations are coordinated (Tomikawa 1979: 28-30, Gulliver 1958: 920-921, Wolf 1980: 309). In order to better understand social peculiarities of the Rendille, it seems important to take the modified points of the age-system into comparative consideration.

In this paper, it has been indicated that the age-system and patrilineal descent group play an important role in the organization of the subsistence group. Looking at the neighboring pastoral peoples of the Rendille, the Samburu age-system is similar in form. However, they have a completely different language and raise different types of livestock (cattle). The Samburu age-system is composed of alternation, age-set, and age-grade. A man is promoted to a higher age-grade as a member of an age-set. Membership of the age-set into which a man joins is determined by the seniority between brothers and the affiliation between the father and his sons in the same way as the Rendille (Spencer 1965: 82-83, 1976: 155-157). On the other hand, the age-system of the Borana and the Gabra are composed of the generation-set, age-set, and generation-grade. A man passes on to a higher generation-grade as a member of a generation-set. Membership of the generation-set is strictly determined by the father-son affiliation and all brothers must join the same generation-set regardless of their ages (Torry 1978, Legesse 1973, Baxter 1978). Concerning the age-system, the principle of father-son affiliation is more rigid in the Borana and the Gabra than in the Rendille and the Samburu.

There are some differences in the age-system between the Samburu and the Rendille. In the case of the Samburu age-system, enrollment into the age-set is closed on the eleventh year after its inauguration. Nobody is allowed to climb up to a higher age-set. And the Samburu have no sapadi-like institution.

From the view-point of pastoral subsistence, the formation of an age-set every 14 years results in the stabilization of cooperative herding. This explanation is seemingly contradictory to the idea of climbing up to a higher age-set. But, actually it will do no harm because those climbers account for at most only 5 % of all age-mates. The origin of sapadi can perhaps be explained as follows. The Rendille say " Long ago there were keen battles between the Rendille and the Borana or the Gabra. The enemies, riding on horseback, frequently attacked the Rendille. Because the youths were too busy fighting their enemies to take care of the camels, unmarried girls were engaged in returning camels to the rear base". This explanation suggests that sapadi originated from the time of the inter-ethnic battle. Spencer (1973: 33) demonstrated that the Rendille look at the Samburu age-set cycle when they initiate a cycle of their own. Recently, the Rendille have gradually begun to recognize the common name of age-set. Moreover, it is said that the Bolo lineage group, who are in charge of circumcision for the Rendille, came from the south with knives for circumcision. Presently, the Samburu and the Dorobo who are in charge of circumcision for the Samburu, live south of the Rendille. Thus it seems that the Rendille age-system is influenced from the Samburu age-system. If this is correct, it may be said that some modifications have been made in the three points; the period of enrollment into an age-set, acceptance of climbing up to a higher age-set, and

sapadi institution, on the age-system to meet the Rendille subsistence.

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NOTES

*1

Strictly speaking, the Rendille are divided into Odola Rendille, Ariaal Rendille and Rendille proper. Odola Rendille live in the boundary between the Rendille proper and the Gabra, and they have one exogamous clan. Ariaal Rendille live in the boundary between the Rendille proper and the Samburu. They have five descent groups the names of which are derived from Samburu descent groups, and share close social and cultural links with them. The Rendille proper have their own clan system into which nine exogamous clans are integrated. This paper deals with the Rendille proper: cf. Spencer (1973).

*2

Polygyny rate: the Turkana, 2.3 (Gulliver 1955), the Somali, 2.1 (Lewis 1961), the Masai, 2.0 (Jacobs 1970), the Murse, 1.7 (Turton 1980), the Karimojong, 1.7 (Dyson-Hudson, N. 1966), the Dassanetch, 1.7 (Almagor 1978), the Jie, 1.6 (Gulliver 1955), and the Samburu, 1.5 (Spencer 1965).

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